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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the statement of the President of the Security Council of 31 October 2001 (S/PRST/2001/30), in which the Council requested me to submit reports on a quarterly basis on the situation in Somalia. The report covers developments since my last report of 20 June 2006 (S/2006/418). The present report focuses on the rise of the Islamic Courts, the challenges faced by the transitional federal institutions and the efforts undertaken to foster a dialogue between the parties. The report also includes an update on the security and human rights situation, and on the humanitarian and development activities of the United Nations agencies and programmes.

II. Main developments in Somalia

2. The situation in Somalia remains a source of concern, in spite of some progress registered in the dialogue process between the transitional federal institutions and the Islamic Courts. In June 2006, militias loyal to the Islamic Courts defeated the forces of the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT) in Mogadishu. The fighting cost hundreds of lives and forced thousands of people to flee their homes, worsening an already dire humanitarian situation. Since then, the Islamic Courts have consolidated their control over the city and restored a semblance of security. The fall of Mogadishu was followed by the extension of the authority of the Islamic Courts into the regions of Middle Shabelle, Hiran, parts of Galgudud and Mudug. These regions comprise the traditional heartland of the Hawiye clan. The influence of the Islamic Courts also extends to the Lower Shabelle and the Lower Juba region.

3. On 26 June 2006, the leaders of the Union of the Islamic Courts announced the creation of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts, comprising a 90-member shura, or legislative committee, led by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweis and an executive committee headed by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. The names of all the members of the two committees are yet to be announced.

4. The rapid expansion of the influence of the Islamic Courts has posed a serious threat to the transitional federal institutions, which already faced difficulties in extending their authority beyond Baidoa, the interim seat of the Transitional Federal

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Parliament. In an effort to reduce tension between the Transitional Federal Government and the Islamic Courts, the League of Arab States organized a meeting in Khartoum on 22 June 2006. The three main leaders of the transitional federal institutions — President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi and Speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden — attended the Khartoum talks, but the Islamic Courts sent a lower level delegation. The parties agreed to: (a) recognize the legality of the transitional federal institutions; (b) recognize the existence of the Islamic Courts; (c) continue talks without preconditions; (d) try war criminals; (e) not engage in any provocative or hostile acts or antagonistic propaganda; (f) make a joint call for peace; and (g) continue discussion on security and political issues as well as other obstacles to peace, through the establishment of technical committees.

5. Soon after signing the 22 June 2006 agreement in Khartoum, however, each side accused the other of violating its provisions. On 10 July 2006, the Transitional Federal Government stated that the Islamic Courts had violated the agreement by taking military action against the last remaining ARPCT leader in Mogadishu, Abdi Awale Qeybdid. The Islamic Courts argued that that did not constitute a violation of the agreement because the military action was directed against an individual, though a leader of the ARPCT. On 20 July 2006, forces loyal to the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts arrived in Burhakaba, 60 kilometres from Baidoa, and reportedly left the same day. The Transitional Federal Government cited this as another violation of the Khartoum agreement. In response, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts asserted that it was invited to the town to protect and escort deserters from pro-Government militias to Mogadishu. At the same time, the Islamic Courts accused the Transitional Federal Government of inviting Ethiopian troops into the country. They described this as a violation of both the Khartoum agreement and the sovereignty of the Somali people. As a result of these recriminations, the second round of talks that had been scheduled for 15 July 2006 was postponed.

6. On 25 July 2006, my Special Representative, François Lonseny Fall, travelled to Baidoa for discussions with the leadership of the transitional federal institutions, and to Mogadishu, where he met with Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, the head of the executive committee of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts. In a joint meeting with the three leaders of the transitional federal institutions in Baidoa, he emphasized the need for unity within the leadership of the transitional federal institutions in the face of the emerging challenges. He also encouraged them to send a delegation to Khartoum for the second round of talks with the Islamic Courts. All three leaders of the transitional federal institutions reaffirmed their commitment to dialogue. My Special Representative made the same appeal in a meeting with Sheikh Sharif in Mogadishu later the same day.

7. Serious internal squabbles prevented the Transitional Federal Government from sufficiently establishing its authority. A crisis arose on 26 July 2006, when a number of parliamentarians, including ministers, criticized the leadership style of Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi. Resignations by a number of cabinet ministers followed. On 30 July 2006, the Prime Minister narrowly survived a parliamentary vote of no-confidence. The vote did not resolve the crisis, however, and Government ministers proceeded to resign.

8. On 5 August 2006, an Ethiopian delegation led by Minister for Foreign Affairs Seyoum Mesfin arrived in Baidoa on a mediation mission. The visit culminated in

the signing of a memorandum of understanding on 6 August 2006, aimed at ending the crisis within the transitional federal institutions. On 10 August 2006, President Yusuf announced the dissolution of the Government and asked Prime Minister Gedi to appoint a leaner, better qualified cabinet. On 18 August 2006, in accordance with the provisions of the memorandum of understanding, Prime Minister Gedi announced a new Council of Ministers comprising 31 ministers, 5 ministers of state and 31 assistant ministers.

9. The second round of peace talks between the two parties opened in Khartoum on 2 September 2006, under the auspices of the League of Arab States. In his statement at the opening ceremony, my Special Representative urged the parties to build on the agreement reached at the first round of talks and to establish joint mechanisms for monitoring, verifying and implementing its conclusions. On 4 September 2006, the Transitional Federal Government and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts signed an agreement in which they, inter alia, agreed to: (a) reconstitute the Somali national army and national police force and work towards reintegration of the forces of the Islamic Courts, the Transitional Federal Government and other armed militias once an agreement on a political programme was in place; (b) practice the principle of peaceful coexistence between Somalia and its neighbours; (c) discuss remaining aspects, including political, power-sharing and security issues in a third round of talks; (d) establish a joint committee to follow-up on the agreement; (e) form a technical committee consisting of the Arab League presidency (the Sudan), the Arab League General Secretariat, the Arab League Committee on Somalia and others from the Transitional Federal Government and the Islamic Courts; and (f) meet in Khartoum for a third round of talks on 30 October 2006.

10. At the conclusion of the second round, I commended the parties for taking that positive step towards resolving their differences through dialogue and consultations. I also encouraged the parties to implement the agreements reached thus far and endeavour to create a conducive environment for the third round of talks.

11. On 18 September 2006, Prime Minister Gedi presented his new government and plan of action to the Transitional Federal Parliament for endorsement, as required under the memorandum of understanding of 6 August 2006. The Parliament endorsed the new Government by a vote of 174 in favour to 25 against.

12. There was a car bomb explosion as President Yusuf left the Parliament building on 18 September 2006 following his opening address to Parliament. The President narrowly survived this apparent assassination attempt that claimed at least 11 lives and left several other people wounded. The attempt on the life of President Yusuf was condemned by the international community, the transitional federal institutions and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts. The Transitional Federal Government also appealed to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU), the League of Arab States and the international community for technical and financial assistance to help with the investigation of the attack. Three suspects were arrested by the police on 29 September 2006. It should be recalled that Prime Minister Gedi had been the target of assassination attempts in Mogadishu in May and November of 2005.

III. Activities of the United Nations and the international community

13. My Special Representative maintained direct contact with the Transitional Federal Government and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts throughout the reporting period, urging them to refrain from actions that could be seen as provocative and to find a negotiated solution through dialogue and reconciliation, within the framework of the Transitional Federal Charter. Pursuant to the recommendations of the statement of the President of the Security Council of 13 July 2006 (S/PRST/2006/31), my Special Representative initiated, in early October 2006, a series of visits to several countries in the region, including Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Uganda and Yemen, for consultations with the leaders of these countries on ways to promote peace and reconciliation in Somalia.

14. The dialogue process facilitated by the League of Arab States has received considerable support from the international community, including the International Contact Group on Somalia, which met on 17 July and 29 August 2006 in Brussels and Stockholm, respectively. The International Contact Group urged the parties to engage in constructive and broad-based consultations to peacefully resolve their differences, build confidence and address issues of common concern. The International Contact Group also called on all the Somali parties to comply with existing international obligations as laid out in relevant United Nations resolutions and international conventions. The International Contact Group urged the parties to firmly reject violence and deny safe haven to terrorists and their supporters.

15. Following the second round of talks in Khartoum, the European Commission offered to establish a task force to facilitate inter-Somali dialogue. Both the Transitional Federal Government and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts responded positively to that initiative. The proposed task force, which would include the United Nations, would work in coordination with the League of Arab States to provide technical and financial support to the transitional federal institutions and the Islamic Courts for the functioning of the two follow-up committees envisaged in the 4 September 2006 agreement. On 26 September 2006, while briefing the international community in Nairobi, Prime Minister Gedi accused the Islamic Courts of repeated violations of agreements reached in Khartoum, but said that the Transitional Federal Government remained committed to the peace process. He emphasized, however, that both sides must strive to create an enabling environment for these talks.

16. During the reporting period, IGAD and the AU pressed ahead with preparations for their proposed peace support operation to Somalia. In a press statement on 29 June 2006, the AU Peace and Security Council repeated its call to the Security Council for a partial lifting of the arms embargo to allow for the establishment of Somali national security forces and the deployment of an IGAD-led peace support mission for Somalia. The heads of State and Government of the members of the AU, at their summit held in Banjul on 5 July 2006, reiterated this request, while also calling for dialogue between the Transitional Federal Government and the Islamic Courts.

17. The AU and IGAD led a fact-finding mission to various locations in Somalia from 5 to 7 July 2006 accompanied by representatives of the League of Arab States and the European Union. The IGAD Council of Ministers and Chiefs of Defence Staff also met in Nairobi on 1 and 18 August 2006, respectively, to finalize a deployment plan for an IGAD-led peace support mission for Somalia.

18. On 5 September 2006, a summit meeting of IGAD member States endorsed a deployment plan for the proposed IGAD-led peace support mission for Somalia. However, delegations from Eritrea and Djibouti did not attend the summit. Both countries have expressed reservations about the deployment of an IGAD-led peace support mission without a political consensus inside Somalia. The deployment plan was approved, however, by the AU Peace and Security Council on 13 September 2006. Its communiqué stated that the proposed IGAD-led peace support mission for Somalia would provide support for the capacity and security of the transitional federal institutions and create conducive conditions for dialogue and reconciliation. In response, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts reiterated its opposition to the proposed peace support mission. In a letter to members of the Security Council dated 24 September 2006, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, on behalf of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts, called on the Security Council to maintain the arms embargo on Somalia and urged all the parties to give the Khartoum negotiations a chance. The letter also urged IGAD member States to stop their partisan interventions in Somalia.

19. On 25 September 2006, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kenya and current Chairman of the IGAD Council of Ministers, Raphael Tuju, had a private meeting with members of the Security Council on the issue of the partial lifting of the arms embargo. On that occasion, the Kenyan Minister for Foreign Affairs renewed the AU and IGAD request for the partial lifting of the arms embargo to facilitate the proposed deployment of an IGAD-led peace support mission for Somalia.

20. There have been continued reports of violations of the arms embargo by Somali and foreign actors. Concern has also been expressed that regional rivalries might be playing out in Somalia, with allegations of continued interference in Somali affairs by neighbouring countries. On 8 August 2006, I wrote to the President of Eritrea, H.E. Mr. Isaias Afwerki, and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, H.E. Mr. Meles Zenawi, encouraging both countries to work with local and international stakeholders to promote peace and reconciliation in Somalia and to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from any action that would violate the arms embargo or heighten tensions in an already volatile situation.

21. In view of the regional dimension of the conflict in Somalia, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are taking steps to ensure increased cooperation and information exchange among the three United Nations missions in the region: the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea and the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS). In this regard, UNPOS hosted the first meeting of my three Special Representatives from those missions on 10 October 2006 in Nairobi, during which they discussed future cooperation and issues of mutual concern.

IV. Other developments in Somalia

22. "Puntland" and "Somaliland" authorities have continued their dispute over the control of the Sool and Sanaag areas. An increase in alleged activities by supporters of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts in both areas is also raising concern.

23. Elsewhere in Somalia, there have been moves towards the establishment of new autonomous regions. In central Somalia, members of the Haber-Gedir Saad sub-clan of the Hawiye announced the formation of a new autonomous region around Galkayo called Gal-Mudug, combining territories from Galgudud and Mudug. Similarly, Barre Aden Shire "Hirale", the Chairman of the Juba Valley Alliance, who is also the Minister of Defence of the Transitional Federal Government, has reportedly proposed the creation of a Jubaland autonomous region, to include the Lower and Middle Juba and Gedo regions. His plan has encountered resistance from the transitional federal institutions, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts and local populations and suffered a further setback with the fall of Kismayo to the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts on 24 September 2006.

V. Security

24. Since my last report, several incidents have further complicated the volatile security situation in Somalia. On 18 September 2006, the Department of Safety and Security requested the immediate relocation of United Nations international staff from Baidoa to Nairobi and the suspension of all missions to Mogadishu until further notice. This decision was taken following the murder of an Italian nun and her bodyguard in Mogadishu on 17 September 2006, the attempt on the life of President Yusuf in Baidoa on 18 September 2006 and threat letters against Department of Safety and Security staff members.

A. Baidoa

25. The security situation in Baidoa remains unstable, as demonstrated by the attempt on the life of President Yusuf on 18 September 2006. The situation has also been affected by tensions within and between local militias. On two occasions in July 2006, members of the Transitional Federal Government forces reportedly defected to the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts. On 28 July 2006, the Minister for Constitutional Affairs, Abdallah Deerow Isaq, was murdered in Baidoa while leaving a mosque after Friday prayers. The killing led to riots in Baidoa. His assassination followed an unsuccessful attempt, a day earlier in Baidoa, on the life of the head of the parliamentary committee for constitutional affairs.

26. On 4 September 2006, a Transitional Federal Government police unit clashed with local Digil-Mirifle clan militias over control of the airport in Baidoa. At least 10 of the militiamen were killed in the confrontation. On 8 September 2006, with tensions rising between the Transitional Federal Government and local clans, Mohamed Ibrahim Habsade, a former Baidoa faction leader, who is also the Minister of Transport, called on the Transitional Federal Government to relocate from Baidoa, saying that it was no longer welcome in the town.

B. The Juba Valley and Gedo

27. Control of the port city of Kismayo has been a point of serious contention among members of the Juba Valley Alliance and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts. Continued insecurity in Kismayo, Lower and Middle Juba and Gedo has led to frequent attacks on humanitarian personnel and convoys. There have also been numerous reports of killings, rapes, extortion and kidnappings. Fear of fighting in Kismayo sparked an influx of refugees, mostly of women and children, into neighbouring Kenya. After inconclusive negotiations with the forces of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts under the command of Hassan Turki, and facing a potential confrontation with the latter, the Chairman of the Juba Valley Alliance, Barre "Hirale", fled Kismayo together with his militia on 24 September 2006. That paved the way for the forces of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts to take over the city.

C. Mogadishu

28. In July 2006, the Islamic Courts drove Abdi Awale Qeybdid, the last remaining leader of the ARPCT, out of Mogadishu. Militias loyal to the other ARPCT warlords surrendered their weapons and equipment. Roadblocks and militia checkpoints were removed and restrictions on the movement of people and vehicles throughout the city were eased. The Islamic Courts reopened Mogadishu international airport on 15 July 2006 and the main seaport on 23 August 2006. Both facilities had been out of operation for more than a decade.

29. In stark contrast to the overall improvement of security in Mogadishu was the murder of a Swedish journalist on 23 June 2006 while he was covering a peace rally in the city, and the assassination of an Italian humanitarian worker and her Somali bodyguard on 17 September 2006. These murders have raised concerns for the safety of foreigners in the city, even though the Islamic Courts have vowed to protect them. The international community is also concerned at the lack of progress with investigations aimed at bringing the perpetrators to justice.

VI. Humanitarian situation

30. Somalia is experiencing the third consecutive *gu* season with below pre-war average cereal production. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, about 1.8 million people — including up to 400,000 internally displaced persons — are in need of critical assistance until the end of 2006. Most of those in need are located along the Juba Valley and in the Gedo region, where malnutrition rates exceed the 15 per cent emergency threshold and cattle losses are estimated at between 40 and 60 per cent.

31. The Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia led three missions to Mogadishu since 9 July 2006. He met with leaders of the Islamic Courts, members of the business community and civil society groups. The meetings with the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts focused, inter alia, on the possible expansion of the humanitarian presence in the capital and the operational aspects of assistance; principles of engagement; security; and the role of civil society, including women. The Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts called for greater engagement by the

humanitarian community and indicated that it would set up the necessary structures to enhance the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance. In early August 2006, the Islamic Courts declared their intention to set up an office in Mogadishu to coordinate humanitarian assistance. Such developments, along with the re-establishment of order and security in areas controlled by the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts, have the potential to create an enabling environment for enhanced humanitarian action. However, the relocation of international staff and the suspension of missions to Mogadishu may jeopardize this window of opportunity. Despite the relocation of international staff, United Nations agencies continue to maintain their activities in 28 locations throughout Somalia with more than 500 national staff.

32. A vessel chartered by the World Food Programme (WFP), carrying 3,300 metric tons of food aid commodities, docked at the Mogadishu seaport on 3 September 2006. The reopening of the seaport will significantly reduce the cost and time needed to deliver food aid to the region.

33. However, the delivery of humanitarian assistance during the reporting period remained difficult. Three airports in south and central Somalia — Garbaharey, Luuq and Baidoa — were closed until further notice. In Garbaharey and Luuq, the closures followed threats issued by local authorities and clan militia against the United Nations. Access was also hindered by clan conflicts. Fighting over the control of salt mines in villages north of Luuq town escalated in July 2006, leading to more than 20 deaths. Other factors impeding access included attacks by local militia on food convoys, local disputes over the selection of contractors and the looting of relief food at distribution points. In Baidoa, the reported presence of armed militia as well as rising tensions over recent attacks on government officials contributed to the insecurity and hindered access.

34. Field consultations for the 2007 consolidated appeal process (CAP) were held in August 2006 in Baidoa, Hargeisa, Garowe and Mogadishu, to ensure grass-roots involvement in identifying the most pressing humanitarian needs and elaborating strategic priorities for 2007. The consultations culminated in a CAP workshop in Nairobi from 30 to 31 August 2006. The workshop identified four strategic priorities that will guide the planning and implementation of humanitarian assistance in Somalia. Reflecting the changing situation on the ground, the consolidated appeal for 2007 is also expected to include an early recovery pillar.

VII. Operational activities to promote peace

A. Human rights and protection

35. Although the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts has restored a measure of peace and security in Mogadishu, serious human rights concerns have emerged in areas under its control. The Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts reportedly banned unauthorized public gatherings and political meetings and indicated that such events could be held only with the prior approval and under the supervision of Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts authorities for reasons related to security. Alleged threats against civil society groups and human rights defenders were also prevalent. Concerns were also raised regarding protection of the right to freedom of

expression. Reports of harassment and arrests of journalists and other media professionals, including the closure of radio stations, increased.

36. Fears were also expressed by some Somali women's organizations regarding what they perceived to be their shrinking political space for participation in decision-making and representation in civil society groups. It was reported that women were no longer able to lead non-governmental organizations. In a bid to safeguard the rights guaranteed to them under the Transitional Federal Charter, representatives of Somali women's groups in Mogadishu were advocating for representation at the Khartoum peace talks. The conscription of youth for military training has also become a major source of concern.

37. The plight of internally displaced persons in Somalia continues. Their situation has been exacerbated by food insecurity and conflict. Within Somalia, there are approximately 400,000 displaced persons who face a range of human rights abuses and are in need of protection. The United Nations and other humanitarian actors continue to try to address their needs.

38. The resettlement of large numbers of internally displaced persons in "Somaliland" remains a challenge. In mid-July 2006, the Minister for Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration and the Mayor of Hargeisa met with United Nations agencies to discuss the permanent relocation of 6,000 to 7,000 households of displaced persons who are now in temporary settlements in Hargeisa.

39. Fire ravaged displaced persons' settlements in Bossaso and Hargeisa during August 2006, causing loss of property and shelter for about 325 families. In "Somaliland", humanitarian agencies provided emergency food and non-food items to the affected households. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme completed a site survey to plan reconstruction of the damaged shelters and assess how site layout may be improved to minimize the risk of fire.

40. The outflow of refugees into Kenya continued unabated. That was exacerbated by insecurity coupled with the effects of the worst drought in a decade. Since the beginning of 2006, about 25,000 new Somali refugees had been registered at the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees receiving 4,220 Somali refugees at Liboi, Kenya, since August 2006 alone. Most of the new refugees, mainly women and children, fled Mogadishu and Kismayo following armed clashes between the Islamic Courts and warlord militias. Other refugees came from the Baidoa area. The steady influx prompted contingency planning on the Kenyan side. Contingency planning for a possible refugee influx was also initiated in Ethiopia and Uganda, where Somali refugee arrivals were also registered since the beginning of the year.

41. The seasonal smuggling of Ethiopian migrants and Somali nationals to Yemen from ports in "Puntland" remains a source of serious concern. Since the beginning of 2006, reports indicated that close to 12,000 Somalis and Ethiopians arrived in Yemen from Bossaso. The new arrivals spoke of a now familiar and tragic ordeal of being pushed off boats while still on the high seas. Four people were reported to have drowned at the beginning of September 2006. There is an urgent need for concerted international and local efforts to address this problem.

B. Governance

42. During the reporting period, the United Nations supported the establishment of four district councils by the transitional federal institutions. Community-based dialogue is under way to establish another six district councils. The United Nations continued to facilitate the operations of the secretariat of the Transitional Federal Parliament, in close coordination with the Association of Western European Parliamentarians for Africa.

43. The United Nations has been coordinating a project to support the formulation of the Somali constitution through broad-based dialogue with key partners, donors and government officials. Initial support has already been given to the federal constitutional commission to set up its offices and start work on planning. The project covers a range of constitution-making activities including broad civic education, consultation, and drafting and validation of the document prior to referendum. The commission was endorsed by the Parliament in June 2006. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is leading a consortium of partners that will implement the project and provide technical, logistical and legal support.

44. UNDP's institutional support project continues to facilitate in-country travel for a large number of officials of the transitional federal institutions as they dialogue with their constituencies and address the need for reconciliation and State-building. This support extends to air transportation between Somalia and Nairobi, allowing officials to interact with representatives of the international community. With donor support, UNDP continues to pay stipends to the executive and the judiciary, as well as to members of Parliament, the independent federal constitutional commission and the national reconciliation commission. UNDP also supports the rehabilitation and equipping of Government-owned buildings in Baidoa for use by the transitional federal institutions.

45. A civil service task force enlisted the support of former commissioners, lawyers, members of Parliament and legal consultants to finalize draft legislation on civil service reform for presentation to Parliament. During the period under review, UNDP also supported the work of four independent commissions entrusted by the "Puntland" authorities to prepare recommendations for institutional reform.

46. In "Somaliland", UNDP continued to support the Civil Service Institute, which provides training to civil servants on a wide range of subjects. It also supported the civil service commission to conduct a human resource survey across all ministries and to complete a series of activities aimed at women's empowerment in public administration.

47. A UNDP project of emergency technical assistance was initiated during the reporting period to build the technical capacity of key institutional offices, targeting the Office of the President, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Office of the Speaker and the Supreme Court, as well as the ministries of finance and planning and integrity institutions. This will enable the Transitional Federal Government to function efficiently during a transition period, until it is in a position and has the resources to build its civil service capacity and longer-term plans get under way.

C. Joint needs assessment

48. In July 2006, the Somali joint needs assessment unit organized stakeholders' workshops in Garowe, Baidoa, Beletweyne and Hargeisa, to review and discuss the preliminary findings and recommendations of the six draft cluster reports. These workshops were attended by representatives of a broad spectrum of Somali society, including regional administrations and parliamentarians, traditional and religious leaders, business communities and professionals, women and youth groups. A plenary session was held in Nairobi. The joint needs assessment process will end with the publication of a reconstruction and development plan for Somalia. The document will include an assessment of priority needs and initiatives; a results-based matrix; programme implementation and monitoring; financing framework and needs; and a management and coordination framework. It was expected that the Somali reconstruction and development plan would be completed by the end of October 2006.

D. Rule of law

49. Following a seminar supported by UNPOS for the re-establishment of the judiciary in Somalia, prospective members of the Supreme Court and the judicial service council were identified. The Supreme Court used the seminar to prepare a structural plan for its reactivation, including a provisional procedure for the registration of constitutional cases.

50. In Baidoa, police cadets were trained and equipped under the UNDP rule of law and security (ROLS) programme. Support included the rehabilitation of infrastructure and stipends for the police. In the Sool and Sanaag areas, phase three of a landmine impact survey began, representing a significant step towards completion of the surveying of all northern regions.

51. The demobilization and reintegration initiative being undertaken by the UNDP ROLS programme continued in "Somaliland" and "Puntland". In "Somaliland", four non-governmental organization partners were selected to conduct reintegration activities. In "Puntland", the reintegration process is ongoing. Additional security forces from "Somaliland" and "Puntland" will be identified for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in late 2006.

52. Following the success of a pilot civilian weapons registration project in Burao and Gabiley in "Somaliland" under the UNDP ROLS programme in 2005, the exercise was extended to Hargeisa in March 2006. Awareness-raising workshops were held in Hargeisa in July 2006, and a registration drive began in August 2006.

53. The recent peace talks in Khartoum between the Transitional Federal Government and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts underlined the need for security sector reform. Both parties indicated their agreement to reconstitute the Somali national army and national police force and work towards reintegration of the forces of Islamic Courts, the Transitional Federal Government and other armed militias in the country. Political consensus on security sector reform is vital for sustainable peace in Somalia. The United Nations stands ready to support national efforts in this area.

E. Water and environmental sanitation

54. The scarcity of safe drinking water is often a source of conflict between communities. In an effort to forestall such conflicts and provide safe drinking water to affected populations, the World Health Organization (WHO) carried out a water quality assessment in the Bakool area of Wajid in August 2006. Affected areas were provided with the means to test water quality. The needs in the water and sanitation sector are considerable, including among vulnerable groups. In Bossaso, for example, less than 30 per cent of internally displaced persons have access to environmental sanitation facilities, such as toilets and latrines, owing mainly to space constraints within the camps and the refusal of landlords to provide space for water and sanitation facilities.

F. Health

55. Although Somalia was polio-free from October 2002 to early July 2005, the disease resurfaced on 12 July 2005. More than 200 polio cases have been confirmed since then. Most cases have been identified in Mogadishu where fighting had delayed immunization activities. Renewed calm has since allowed the immunization of 99 per cent of Mogadishu's children under five years of age. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), WHO and health partners have planned four national immunization days in the coming months, targeting an estimated 1.4 million children under five. There is guarded optimism that it will be possible to stop polio transmission in Somalia.

56. The measles catch-up campaign in Mogadishu was interrupted in May 2006 due to fighting, but it resumed in late July 2006 and was successfully completed in six districts of the city. The campaign carried out by WHO, UNICEF and health partners, in coordination with the Islamic Courts, reached over 95 per cent of the targeted children. This is the best coverage achieved in Mogadishu in the last 15 years. The second phase of the campaign, targeting children aged 9 months to 5 years, has since been completed in three more districts of the city. The campaign in the Bay and Gedo regions was successfully concluded in July 2006. All districts of the five drought-affected regions of south and central Somalia have now been covered.

57. The fourth in a series of training courses on managing drug supplies for health facilities in drought-affected regions of south and central Somalia was held in Wajid from 21 to 23 August 2006. The workshop was attended by 25 pharmacists, storekeepers, qualified nurses and drug dispensers from Bakool, Lower Shabelle, Gedo, Bay, Middle Juba and Hiran. The main objective of the course was to increase the participants' knowledge of proper drug storage, and the distribution and dispensing of medicines and other medical commodities.

G. HIV/AIDS

58. The results of the WHO 2004 sero-surveillance survey showed an average HIV prevalence of 0.9 per cent in three regions of Somalia. This data indicates that Somalia is approaching a generalized HIV/AIDS epidemic. The development of a strategic framework for the control of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted

infections among Somali populations and the mobilization of resources from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Nations and others have facilitated the establishment of the South Central AIDS Commission, the Puntland AIDS Commission, and the Somaliland AIDS Commission.

59. In recognition of the key role of Somali women in efforts to reduce the transmission and impact of HIV, UNICEF had trained 90 women across Somalia by the end of August 2006. They will act as mobilizers in their communities to increase HIV prevention, care and support efforts through informal peer education sessions and outreach activities targeting highly vulnerable groups in displaced persons' camps and border areas and along major trucking routes.

H. Education

60. UNICEF continues to promote a culture of peacebuilding and conflict resolution through education in Somalia. The role of children in conflict resolution is being promoted through school clubs, Koranic education and radio programmes that enhance their self-confidence and capacity to identify and address problems in their communities. From June to September 2006, UNICEF trained 1,779 head teachers and 112 youth trainers on life skills education modules covering conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In Mogadishu, 4,000 teachers from south and central Somalia received training in peacebuilding as part of an outreach effort for 70,000 schoolchildren from conflict-affected regions.

61. In a bid to improve enrolment and attendance rates in Somali schools, WFP, in collaboration with UNICEF and non-governmental organizations, continued to support school feeding programmes benefiting over 33,000 schoolchildren in 117 schools affected by recurrent drought and prolonged civil conflict.

VIII. Observations

62. The dialogue between the transitional federal institutions and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts, facilitated by the League of Arab States, is a positive development. I commend the two parties for the agreements reached thus far on a number of important principles, and I urge them to pursue their dialogue with a view to reaching a comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the current crisis.

63. I also call on the two parties not to take any action that would exacerbate the political and military tensions in Somalia, as this would complicate efforts to reach a negotiated settlement through dialogue. In this regard, I encourage the parties to activate and make full use of the joint committees envisaged in the Khartoum agreement of 4 September 2006, with a view to fostering mutual confidence and helping to ensure steady progress in the peace talks. The United Nations stands ready to assist the parties in this process within its capacity.

64. I condemn the assassination attempt on President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed in Baidoa on 18 September 2006. That unacceptable incident underscored the precariousness of the situation in Somalia and the importance of restoring peace and stability throughout the country. I reiterate my call on the Somali parties to redouble

their efforts to reach a sustainable peace, which is essential for the restoration of the rule of law, the protection of human rights and the realization of a healthy democratic order for the benefit of all the people of Somalia.

65. I am pleased that the recent internal crisis within the transitional federal institutions was resolved, and I commend President Yusuf, Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Gedi and Speaker of Parliament Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan for expeditiously overcoming their differences through a consultative process. Unity among the leaders of the transitional federal institutions is vital to enable the institutions to confront the formidable challenges ahead in line with the Transitional Federal Charter, which remains the legitimate framework for governance in the country. I also wish to congratulate the members of the Transitional Federal Parliament for proceeding with the approval of the new cabinet presented by Prime Minister Gedi, undeterred by the horrible car bomb attack outside the parliament site earlier that same day.

66. The recent developments, including the emergence of the Islamic Courts as a major player, have increased international attention on Somalia. It is imperative that this renewed international interest be channelled in the most constructive way possible, with a view to helping move Somalia out of its protracted state of crisis and placing it firmly on a path of peace, reconciliation and stability. I call on the international community to support the political reconciliation efforts, including the dialogue process between the transitional federal institutions and the Islamic Courts. The sustained support of the international community, speaking with one voice, is crucial to avert a greater crisis in Somalia and the wider region, and to encourage the Somali parties to overcome their differences through inclusive dialogue. In this regard, I welcome the establishment of the International Contact Group on Somalia, which is now playing an important role in helping to guide the international community's common approach to the rapidly evolving situation in Somalia.

67. I once again express my deep appreciation to IGAD, the AU, the League of Arab States, the European Union and Member States for their efforts to support peace and reconciliation in Somalia. I appeal to them to harmonize their efforts in order to provide more coordinated and coherent international support for the Somali peace process. I also appeal to all the neighbouring countries to respect the United Nations arms embargo on Somalia, and I reiterate my call for them to exercise maximum restraint in order not to jeopardize the ongoing peace efforts or fuel regional instability.

68. The Security Council, at its 5535th meeting on 25 September, received a briefing by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kenya and current Chairman of the IGAD Council of Ministers, during which he renewed the AU and IGAD request for the partial lifting of the arms embargo to facilitate the proposed deployment of an IGAD-led peace support mission to Somalia. In considering whether to grant the requested exemption, the Council will need to take into account a number of factors. Ideally, the deployment of such a force should be in support of a peace agreement or a political process and should enjoy the consent of all major parties. In any case, it would be desirable that the peace support mission receive sufficient political support, both from within Somalia and from the subregion. Our experience in peacekeeping operations throughout the world in recent decades has shown us the importance of clear mandates, adequate and sustained resources and broad political

support to ensure that such missions succeed in helping to restore peace and stability in troubled lands.

69. The United Nations will continue its efforts to support the transitional federal institutions in matters relating to capacity-building, humanitarian assistance and development. Efforts will also be made to ensure the early operationalization of the Coordination and Monitoring Committee with a view to facilitating more cohesive and coordinated international support for the Transitional Federal Government.

70. I commend the United Nations programmes and agencies for their continued delivery of humanitarian assistance to Somalia, and I encourage the international community to continue to generously support humanitarian relief and development assistance efforts to help the Somali people combat the humanitarian and developmental challenges. Humanitarian access remains a serious concern. The need to improve the security of humanitarian personnel cannot be underestimated. I once again call on all Somali parties to provide free and unhindered access to all humanitarian relief efforts aimed at alleviating the suffering of vulnerable populations in Somalia. I also appeal to all parties to uphold and respect the fundamental human rights of all people everywhere in Somalia.

71. Finally, I wish to reaffirm my deep appreciation to my Special Representative for Somalia for his leadership and relentless efforts to foster inclusive dialogue and reconciliation between the transitional federal institutions and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Courts. I call upon all Somali parties and Member States to continue to lend him their fullest support and cooperation in the pursuit of this goal.